

WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ?

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CHAPTER VII

WHO WERE THE SHUDRAS ? SHUDRAS WERE KSHATRIYAS

WHO were the Shudras if they were not a non-Aryan aboriginal race? This question must now be faced. The theory I venture to advance may be stated in the following three propositions:

- (1) The Shudras were Aryans.
- (2) The Shudras belonged to the Kshatriya class.
- (3) The Shudras were so important a class of Kshatriyas that some of the most eminent and powerful kings of the ancient Aryan communities were Shudras.

This thesis regarding the origin of the Shudras is a startling if not a revolutionary thesis. So startling it is that not many people will be ready to accept it, even though there may be enough evidence to support it. My obligation is to produce the evidence, leaving the people to judge its worth.

The primary piece of evidence on which this thesis rests is a passage which occurs in Verses 38-40 of Chapter 60 of the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata. It reads as follows :

"It has been heard by us that in the days of old a Shudra of the name of Paijavana gave a Dakshina (in his own sacrifice) consisting of a hundred thousand Purnapatras according to the ordinance called Aindragni."

The important statements contained in this passage are three : (1) that Paijavana was a Shudra, (2) that this Shudra Paijavana performed sacrifices, and (3) the Brahmins performed sacrifices for him and accepted Dakshina from him.

The passage quoted above is taken from Mr. Roy's edition of the Mahabharata. The first thing is to ascertain whether the text is accurate or whether there are any variant readings. As regards the authenticity of his text, this is what Mr. Roy* says :

"As far as my edition is concerned it is substantially based on that of Royal

Asiatic Society of Bengal, published about forty-five years ago under the superintendence of a few learned Pandits of Bengal aided, as I believe, by an English Orientalist of repute. Manuscripts had been procured from all parts of India (the South unexcepted) and these were carefully collated. Although edited with such care, I have not, however, slavishly followed the Society's edition. I have compared it carefully with the Maharajah of Burdwan's text in the Bengalee character which was edited with still greater care. About 18 manuscripts procured from different parts of India (the South not excepted) were carefully collated by the Burdwan Pandits before they admitted a single *sloka* as genuine."

Prof. Sukthankar, the erudite editor of the critical edition of the Mahabharata, after examining many editions of the Mahabharata, concluded by saying that :

"The *editio princeps* (Calcutta—1856) remains the best edition of the Vulgate, after the lapse of nearly a century."

Although the authenticity of Mr. Roy's edition of the Mahabharata cannot be doubted, it would not be unreasonable if critics were to say that they would like to know what other manuscript support there is behind this text, which is made the basis of this new theory of the origin of the Shudras. In undertaking such an inquiry it is necessary to point to two considerations. One is that there is no such thing as a Mahabharata manuscript in the sense of complete sets of manuscripts covering all the eighteen Parvans. Each Parvan is treated as a separate unit with the result that the number of copies of the different Parvans to be found differ by a vast margin. Consequently, the number of manuscripts to be taken as a basis for deciding which is the correct text must vary with each Parvan.

The second consideration to which attention must be drawn is the fact that the text of the Mahabharata has been handed down in two divergent forms; a Northern and a Southern recension, texts, typical of the Aryavrata and the Dakshinapatha.

It is obvious that an examination of manuscript support must be based upon collation from a fair number of manuscripts and a fair distribution of the manuscripts between the Northern and the Southern recensions. Bearing these considerations in mind, the results of the collation of the text of *Shloka* 38 of the 60th chapter of the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata with which we are primarily concerned from different manuscripts is presented below :

1. Shudrah Paijavano nama (K) S
2. Shudrah Pailavano nama (M/1: M/2) S
3. Shudrah Yailanano nama (M/3 : M/4) S
4. Shudmh Yaijanano nama (F)

5. Shudropi Yajane nama (L)
6. Shudrah Paunjalka nama (TC) S
7. Shuddho Vaibhavano nama (G) N
8. Pura Vaijavano nama (A, D/2)
9. Pura Vaijanano nama (M) N

Here is the result of the collation of nine manuscripts. Are nine manuscripts enough for constituting a text which has a number of variant readings? It is true that the number of manuscripts taken for the critical edition of the different Parvans of the Mahabharata exceeds nine. For the entire Mahabharata the minimum number of manuscripts taken for constituting the text is only ten. It cannot therefore be contended that nine is an insufficient number. The nine manuscripts fall into two geographical divisions. Northern and Southern. M1, M2, M3, M4 and TC belong to the Southern recession. A, M, G, D2 belong to the Northern recession. The selections of the manuscripts therefore satisfy the two tests which experts have laid down.

I am grateful to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute for allowing me to use their collation sheet. Letters in brackets indicate the index number given by the Institute to the manuscript. N or S indicate whether the manuscript comes from the North or South. K is Kumbhakonam.

A scrutiny of the readings shows that :

- (1) there is a variation in the description of Paijavana;
- (2) there is a variation in the name of Paijavana;
- (3) of the nine texts, six agree in describing him as a Shudra. One describes him as Shuddha and two instead of speaking of the class to which he belonged refer to the time when he lived and use the word 'Pura';
- (4) with regard to the name, there is no agreement between any two of the nine manuscripts. Each gives a different reading.

Given this result, the question is what is the real text? Taking first the texts relating to the name, it is obvious that this is not a matter in which the question of meaning is involved. It does not raise any questions such as interpretation *versus* emendation or of giving preference to a reading which suggests how other readings might have arisen. The question is which is the correct name and which readings are scriptural blunders committed by the scribes. There seems to be no doubt that the correct text is Paijavana. It is supported by both the recessions, Southern as well as Northern. For Vaijavano in No.S is the same as Paijavano. All the rest are variations which are due to the ignorance of the scribes in not being able to read the original copy correctly and then trying to constitute the text in their own way.

Turning to the description of Paijavana, the change from *Shudrah* to *Pura*, it

must be granted, is not accidental. It appears to be deliberate. Why this change has occurred it is difficult to say categorically. Two things appear to be quite clear. In the first place, the change appears to be quite natural. In the second place, the change does not militate against the conclusion that Paijavana was a Shudra. The above conclusion will be obvious if the context, in which verses 38-40 occur, is borne in mind. The context will be clear from the following verses which precede them:

"The Shudra should never abandon his master whatever the nature or degree of the distress into which the latter may fall. If the master loses his wealth, he should with excessive zeal be supported by the Shudra servant. A Shudra cannot have any wealth that is his own. Whatever he possesses belongs to his master. Sacrifice has been laid down as a duty of the three other orders. It has been ordained for the Shudra also, O! Bharata. A Shudra however is not competent to utter *swaha* and *svadha* or any other *mantra*. For this reason, the Shudra, without observing the vows laid down in the Vedas, should worship the gods in minor sacrifices called *Pakayajnas*. The gift called *Pumapatra* is declared to be the *Dakshina* of such sacrifices."

Taking the verses 38 to 40 in the context of these verses preceding them, it becomes clear that the whole passage deals with the Shudra. The story of Paijavana is a mere illustration. Against this background, it is unnecessary to repeat the word 'Shudra' before Paijavana. This explains why the word Shudra does not occur before Paijavana in the two manuscripts. As to the reason for the use of the word *pura* in place of Shudra it must be remembered that the case of Paijavana had occurred in very ancient times. It was therefore quite natural for the scribe to feel that it was desirable to put this fact in express terms. The writer being aware that there was no necessity for describing Paijavana as Shudra since that was made clear from the context, it was not necessary to emphasise it. On the other hand, knowing that Paijavana had lived in very ancient times and that that fact was not made very clear from the context, the writer thought it more appropriate to add the word *Pura* which was necessary and omit the word *Shudrah* which having regard to the context was unnecessary.

If this explanation is well-founded, we may take it as well established that the person referred to in the passage in the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata is Paijavana and that this Paijavana was a Shudra.

II

The next question that falls due for consideration is the identification of Paijavana. Who is this Paijavana?

Yaska's Nirukta seems to give us a clue. In *Nirukta* ii.24 *Yaska* Says:

"The seer *Vishvamitra* was the *purohita* of *Sudas*, the son of *Pijavana*,

Vishvamitra, friend of all. All, moving together. Sudas a bountiful giver. *Paijavana*, son of Pijavana. Again *Pi-javana* one whose speed is enviable or whose gait is inimitable."

From Yaska's Nirukta we get two very important facts : (1) Paijavana means son of Pijavana, and (2) the person who is the son of Paijavana is Sudas. With the help of Yaska, we are able to answer the question: who is Paijavana referred to in the passage in the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata? The answer is that Paijavana is simply another name for Sudas.

The next question is who is this Sudas and what do we know about him? A search in the Brahmanic literature discloses three persons with the name Sudas. One Sudas is mentioned in the Rig Veda. His family particulars are given in the following stanzas of the Rig Veda :

1. *Rig Veda*, vii.18.21.—" Parashara, the destroyer of hundreds (of Rakshasas), and Vasishtha, they who, devoted to thee, have glorified thee in every dwelling, neglect not the friendship of thee (their) benefactor; therefore prosperous days dawn upon the pious."
2. *Rig Veda*, vii. 18.22.— "Praising the liberality of Sudas, the grandson of Devavata, the son of Paijavana, the donor of two hundred cows, and of two chariots with two wives, I, worthy (of the gift), circumambulate thee, Agni, like the ministrant priest in the chamber (of sacrifice)"
3. *Rig Veda*, vii.18.23.— "Four (horses), having golden trappings, going steadily on a difficult road, celebrated on the earth, the excellent and acceptable gifts (made) to me by Sudas, the son of Pijavana; bear me as a son (to obtain) food and progeny."
4. *Rig Veda*, vii. 18.24.— "The seven worlds praise (Sudas) as if he were Indra; him whose fame (spreads) through the spacious heaven and earth; who, munificent, has distributed (wealth) on every eminent person, and (for whom) the flowing (rivers) have destroyed Yudhyamadhi in war."
5. *Rig Veda*, vii.18.25.— "*Maruts*, leaders (of rites), attend upon this (prince) as you did upon Divodasa, the father of Sudas: favour the prayers of the devout son of Pijavana, and may his strength be unimpaired, undecaying."

The two others are mentioned by the Vishnu Purana. One Sudas is mentioned in Chapter IV as the descendant of Sagara. The genealogical tree connecting this Sudas with Sagara is as follows:

"Sumati, the daughter of Kasyapa and Kesini, the daughter of Raja Vidarbha, were the two wives of Sagara. Being without progeny, the king solicited the aid of the sage Aurva with great earnestness, and the Muni

pronounced this boon, that one wife should bear one son, the upholder of his race, and the other should give birth to sixty thousand sons; and he left it to them to make their election. Kesini chose to have the single son; Sumati the multitude; and it came to pass in a short time that the former bore Asamanjas, a prince through whom the dynasty continued; and the daughter of Vinata (Sumati) had sixty thousand sons. The son of Asamanjas was Ansumat.

The son of Ansumat was Dilipa; his son was Bhagiratha, who brought Ganga down to earth, whence she is called Bhagirathi. The son of Bhagiratha was Sruta; his son was Nabhaga; his son was Ambarisha; his son was Sindhudvipa; his son was Ayutashva; his son was Ritupama, the friend of Nala, skilled profoundly in dice. The son of Ritupama was Sarvakama; his son was Sudasa; his son was Saudasa, named also Mitrasaha."

Another Sudas is mentioned in Chapter XIX as a descendant of Puru. The genealogical tree connecting this Sudas with Puru is as follows :

"The son of Puru was Janamejaya; his son was Prechinvat; his son was Pravira, his son was Manasyu; his son was Bhayada; his son was Sudhumna; his son was Bahugava; his son was Samyati; his son was Bhamyati; his son was Raudrashva, who had ten sons, Riteyu, Kaksheyu, Stnandileyu, Ghriteyu, Jaleyu, Sthaleyu, Dhaneyu, Vaneyu, and Vrateyu. The son of Riteyu was Rantinara whose sons were Tansu, Aptiratha, and Dhruva. The son of the second of these was Kanva, and his son was Medhatithi, from whom the Kanvayana Brahmans are descended. Anila was the son of Tansu, and he had four sons, of whom Dushyanta was the elder. The son of Dushyanta was the emperor Bharata;...

Bharata had by different wives nine sons, but they were put to death by their own mothers, because Bharata remarked that they bore no resemblance to him, and the women were afraid that he would therefore desert them. The birth of his sons being thus unavailing, Bharata, sacrificed to the Maruts, and they gave him Bharadvaja, the son of Brihaspati by Mamata the wife of Utathya.

He was also termed Vitatha, in allusion to the unprofitable (*vitatha*) birth of the sons of Bharata. The son of Vitatha was Bhavanmanyu: his sons were many, and amongst them the chief were Brihatkshatra, Mahavirya, Nara and Garga. The son of Nara was Sankriti; his sons were Ruchiradhi and Rantideva. The son of Garga was Sini; and their descendants called Gargyas and Sainyas, although Kshatriyas by birth, became Brahmans. The son of Mahavirya was Urukshaya, who had three sons, Trayyaruna, Pushkarin and

Kapi, the last of whom became a Brahmin. The son of Brihatkshatra was Suhotra, whose son was Hastin, who founded the city of Hastinapur. The sons of Hastin were Ajamidha, Dvimidha and Purumidha. One son of Ajamidha was Kanva, whose son was Medhatithi, his other son was Brihadshu, whose son was Brinadvasu; his son was Brihatkarman: his son was Jayadratha, his son was Vishvajit, his son was Senajit, whose sons were Ruchirashva, Kasya, Dridhadhanush, and Vasahanu. The son of Ruchiraswa was Prithusena: his son was Para; his son was Nipa; he had a hundred sons, of whom Samara, the principal, was the ruler of Kampilya. Samara had three sons, Para, Sampara, Sadashva. The son of Para was Prithu; his son was Sukriti; his son was Vibhratra; his son was Anuha, who married Kritvi, the daughter of Shuka (the son of Vyasa), and had by her Brahmadata; his son was Vishvaksena; his son was Udaksena; and his son was Bhallata. The son of Dvimidha was Yavinara; his son was Dhritimat; his son was Satyadhriti; his son was Dridhanemi; his son was Suparshva, his son was Sumati; his son was Sannatimat; his son was Krita, to whom Hiranyanabha taught the philosophy of the Yoga, and he compiled twenty-four Sanhitas (or compendia) for the use of the eastern Brahmins, who study the Sama-Veda. The son of Krita was Ugrayudha, by whose prowess the Nipa race of Kshatriyas was destroyed; his son was Kshemya; his son was Suvira; his son was Nripanjaya; his son was Bahuratha. These were all called Pauravas.

Ajamidha had a wife called Nilini, and by her he had a son named Nila: his son was Santi; his son was Susanti; his son was Purujanu; his son was Chakshu; his son was Haryashva, who had five sons. Mudgala, Srinjaya, Brihadishu, Pravira, and Kampilya. Their father said, "These my five (pancha) sons are able (alam) to protect the countries"; and hence they were termed the Panchalas. From Mudgala descended the Maudgalya Brahmins; he had also a son named Bahvashva, who had two children, twins, a son and daughter, Divodasa and Ahalya.

The son of Divodasa was Mitrayu; his son was Chyavana; his son was Sudasa; his son was Saudasa, also called Sahadeva; his son was Somaka; he had a hundred sons, of whom Jantu was the eldest, and Prishata the youngest. The son of Prishata was Drupada; his son was Dhrishtadyumna; his son was Drishtaketu.

Another son of Ajamidha was named Riksha; his son was Samvarana; his son was Kuru, who gave his name to the holy district Kurukshetra; his sons were Sudhanush, Parikshit, and many others. The son of Sudhanush was Suhotra; his son was Chyavana; his son was Kritaka; his son was Uparichara the Vasu, who had seven children Brihadratha, Pratyagra, Kushamba,

Mavella, Matsya, and others. The son of Brihadratha was Kusagra; his son was Rishabha; his son was Pushpavat; his son was Satyadhrita; his son was Sudhanvan; and his son was Jantu. Brihadratha had another son, who being born in two parts, which were put together (*sandhita*) by a female fiend named Jara, he was denominated Jarasandha; his son was Sahadeva; his son was Somapi; his son was Srutasravas, These were kings of Magadha."

The immediate ancestry of the three Sudasas is put below in parallel columns to facilitate the settlement of the question whether they are one or three different persons:

	Status in Rig	Veda		Sudas in Vishnu Purana
VII, 18:22	VII, 18:23	VII 18:25	In the Sagar Family	In the Puru Family
Devavata Pijavana	Pijavana Sudas	Divodasa= Pijavana	Rituparna	Bahvashva
			Sarvakama	Divodasa
Sudas		Sudas		Mitrayu
			Sudas	Chyavana
			Saudasa=	Sudas
			Mitrasaha	Saudasa
				Somaka

From the table two things are as clear as day-light. First is that neither Sudas mentioned in the Vishnu Purana has anything to do with the Sudas mentioned in the Rig Veda. The second point which is clear is that if the Pajavana mentioned in the Mahabharata can be identified with anybody who lived in ancient times it can only be with Sudas mentioned in Rig Veda who was called Pajavana because he was the son of Pijavana which was another name of Divodasa.

Fortunately. for me my conclusion is the same as that of Prof.Weber. In commenting upon the passage in the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata on which my thesis is based Prof.Weber says :

"Here the remarkable tradition is recorded that Pajavana, i.e., Sudas who was so famous for his sacrifices and who is celebrated in the Rig Veda as the patron of Vishvamitra and enemy of Vasishtha, was a Shudra."

Prof.Weber unfortunately did not realize the full significance of this passage. This is another matter. It is enough for my purpose to find that he too thinks that the Pajavana of the Mahabharata is no other than Sudas of the Rig Veda.

III

What do we know about Sudas, the Paijavana?

The following particulars are available about him:

1. Sudas was neither Dasa nor Arya. Both the Dasas as well as the Aryas were his enemies This means that he was a Vedic Aryan.
2. The father of Sudas was Divodasa. He seems to be the adopted son of Vadhryashva. Divodasa was a king. He fought many battles against Turvasas and Yadus, Shambara, Parava, and Karanja and Gungu. There was a war between Turyavana and Divodasa and his allies Ayu and Kutsa. The victory went to Turyavana.

It seems that at one time Indra was against him particularly in the battle of Turyavana. His purohita was Bharadvaja, to whom Divodasa gave many gifts. Bharadvaja seems to have played the part of a traitor by joining Turyavana against Divodasa.

There is no reference to the mother of Sudas. But there is a reference to the wife of Sudas. His wife's name is given as Sudevi. It is said that the Ashvins procured her for Sudas.

3. Sudas was a king and his coronation ceremony was performed by the Brahma-rishi, Vasistha. The Aitarreya Brahmana gives the following list of the kings who had the Mahabhisheka ceremony performed and the name of the Purohita who officiated at *it*.

"With this ceremony Sharyata, the son of Manu, was inaugurated by Chyavana, the son of Bhrigu. Thence Sharyata went conquering all over the earth, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse, and was even at the sacrificial session held by the gods, the house-father."

"With this ceremony Samasushama, the son of Vajaratna, inaugurated Shatanika, the son of Satrajit. Thence Shatanika went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

"With this ceremony Parvata and Narada inaugurated Ambashthya. Thence Ambashthya went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

"With this ceremony Parvata and Narada inaugurated Yudhamasraushti, the son of Ugrasena. Thence Yudhamasraushti went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

"With this inauguration ceremony Kashyapa inaugurated Vishva-karma, the son of Bhuvana. Thence Vishvakarma went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

"They say that the earth sang to Vishvakarma the following stanza: "No

mortal is allowed to give me away (as donation). O, Vishva-karma, thou hast given me, (therefore) I shall plunge into the midst of the sea. In vain was thy promise made to Kashyapa.' "

"With this ceremony Vasishtha inaugurated Sudas, the son of Pijavana. Thence Sudas went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

"With this inauguration ceremony Samvarta, the son of Angiras, inaugurated Maruta, the son of Avikshit Thence Maruta went conquering everywhere over the whole earth up to *its* ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse."

In this list there is a specific mention of Sudas and of his coronation having been performed by Vasishtha.

Sudas was the hero in the famous Dasharajna Yuddha or the battle of the ten kings described in the *Rig Veda*. References to this famous battle occur in the various Suktas of the Seventh Mandala of the Rig Veda.

Sukta 83 says:

4. "Indra and Varuna, you protected Sudas, overwhelming the yet unassailed Bheda with your fatal weapons; hear the prayers of these Tritsus in time of battle, so that my ministrations may have borne them fruit."

6. "Both (Sudas and the Tritsus) call upon you two, (Indra and Varuna), in combats for the acquirement of wealth, when you defend Sudas, together with the Tritsus, when attacked by the ten Rajas."

7. "The ten confederated irreligious Rajas did not prevail, Indra and Varuna, against Sudas; the praise of the leaders (of rites), the offerers of sacrificial food, was fruitful; the gods were present at their sacrifices."

9. "One of you destroys enemies in battle, the other ever protects religious observances; we invoke you, showerers (of benefits), with praises; bestow upon us, Indra and Varuna, felicity."

Sukta 33 says:

2. "Disgracing (Pashadyumna), they brought from afar the fierce Indra, when drinking the ladle of Soma at his sacrifice, to (receive) the libation (of Sudas); Indra hastened from the effused Soma of Pashadyumna, the son of Vayata, to the Vasishthas."

3. "In the same manner was he, (Sudas), enabled by them easily to cross the Sindhu river; in the same manner, through them he easily slew his foes; so in like manner, Vasishthas, through your prayers, did Indra defend Sudas in the war with the ten kings."

"Suffering from thirst, soliciting (rain), supported (by the Tritsus) in the war with the ten Rajas, (the Vasishthas) made Indra radiant as the sun; Indra heard (the praises) of Vasishtha glorifying him, and bestowed a spacious region on the Tritsus."

Sukta 19 says:

3. "Undaunted (Indra), thou hast protected with all thy protecti-ons Sudas, the offerer of oblations; thou hast protected, in battles with enemies for the possession of the earth, TRASADASYU, the son of PURUKUTSA. and PURU."

6. "Thy favours, Indra, to Sudas, the donor (of offerings), the presenter of oblations, are infinite;showerer (of benefits)I yoke for thee (thy vigorous) steeds; may our prayers, reach thee who art mighty, to whom many rites are addressed."

Sukta 18 of the Seventh Mandala says :

5. "The adorable Indra made the well-known deep waters (of the Parushni) fordable for Sudas, and converted the vehement awakening imprecation of the sacrificer into the calumniation of the rivers."

6. "TURVASHA, who was preceding (at solen rites), diligent in sacrifice, (went to Sudas) for wealth; but like fishes restricted (to the element of water), the Bhrigus and Druhyus quickly assailed them; of these two everywhere going, the friend (of Sudas, Indra) rescued his friend."

7. "Those who dress the oblation, those who pronounce auspicious words, those who abstain from penance, those who bear horns (in their hands), those who bestow happiness (on the world by sacrifice), glorify that Indra, who recovered the cattle of the Arya from the plunderers, who slew the enemies in battle."

8." The evil-disposed and stupid (enemies of Sudas), crossing the humble Parushni river, have broken down its banks;but he by his greatness pervades the earth, and KAVI. the son of CHAYAMANA, like a falling victim, sleeps (in death)."

9. "The waters followed their regular course to the Parushni, nor (wandered) beyond it; the quick course (of the king) came to the accessible places, and INDRA made the idly-talking enemies, with their numerous progeny, subject among them (to Sudas)."

10. "They who ride on parti-coloured cattle, (the Maruts), despatched by PRISHNI, and recalling the engagement made by them with their friend (Indra), came like cattle from the pasturage, when left without a herdsman; the exulting Niyut steeds brought them quickly (against the foe)."

11. "The hero INDRA created the Maruts (for the assistance of the Raja), who, ambitious of fame, slew one and twenty of the men on the two banks (of the Parushni), as a well looking priest lops the sacred grass in the chamber of sacrifice."

12. "Thou, the bearer of the thunderbolt, didst drown SHRUTA, KAVASHA,

VRIDDHA, and afterwards DRUHYU in the waters; for they, Indra, who are devoted to thee, and glorify thee, preferring thy friendship, enjoy it."

13. "Indra, in his might, quickly demolished all their strongholds, and their seven (kinds of) cities; he has given the dwelling of the son of ANU to TRITSU; may we, (by propitiating), (Indra) conquer in battle the ill-speaking man."

14. "The warriors of the ANUS and DRUHYUS. intending (to carry off the) cattle, (hostile) to the pious (SUDAS), perished to the number of sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty; such are all the glorious acts of INDRA."

15. "These hostile Tritsus, ignorantly contending with INDRA, fled, routed as rapidly as rivers on a downward course, and being discomfited abandoned all their possessions to SUDAS."

16. "INDRA has scattered over the earth the hostile rival of the hero (SUDAS), the senior of INDRA, the appropriator of the oblation; INDRA has baffled the wrath of the wrathful enemy, and the (foe) advancing on the way (against SUDAS) has taken the path of flight."

17. "INDRA has effected a valuable (donation) by a pauper; he has slain an old lion by a goat; he has cut the angles of the sacrificial post with a needle; he has, given all the spoils (of the enemy) to SUDAS."

18. "Thy numerous enemies, INDRA, have been reduced to subjugation,' effect at some time or other the subjugation of the turbulent BHEDA.who holds men praising thee as guilty of wickedness; hurl, INDRA, thy sharp thunderbolt against him."

19. "The dwellers on the Yamuna and Tritsus glorified INDRA when he killed BHEDA in battle; the Ajas, the Shigrus, the Yakshas, offered to him as a sacrifice the heads of the horses killed in the combat"

20. "Thy favours, INDRA, and thy bounties, whether old or new, cannot be counted like the (recurring) dawns; thou hast slain DEVAKA, the son of MANYAMANA and of thine own will hast cast down SHAMBARA from the vast (mountain)."

In this battle the kings who fought against Sudas were: (1) Shinyu, (2) Turvasha, (3) Druhyu, (4) Kavasha, (5) Puru, (6) Anu, (7) Bheda, (8) Shambara, (9) Vaikama, (10) another Vaikama, (11) Yadu, (12) Matsya, (13) Paktha, (14) Bhalanas, (15) Aleena, (16) Vishanin, (17) Aja, (18) Shiva, (19) Shigru, (20) Yakshu, (21) Yudhyamadhi, (22) Yadva, (23) Devaka Manyamana, (24) Chayamana Kavi, (25) Sutuka, (26) Uchatha, (27) Shruta, (28) Vriddha, (29) Manyu, and (30) Prithu.

Obviously, the war was a much bigger war than its name indicates. The war must have been a very great event in the history of the Indo-Aryans. No wonder the victorious Sudas became a great hero of his time. We do not know what

exactly led to this war. Some indication is given by Rig Veda, vii.83.7, where the kings arrayed against Sudas are described as irreligious which suggests that it was probably a religious war.

4. Sayanacharya, as well as tradition, declare the following hymns of the Rig Veda to have had the under-mentioned kings for their rishis :

"Vitahavya (or Bharadva)a x.9, Sindhudvipa, son of Ambarisha (or Trisiras, son of Tvashtri) x.75, Sindhukshit, son of Priyamedha; x.133, Sudas, son of Pijavana; x.134, Mandhatri, son of Yuvanasa;x.179, Sibi, son of Usinara, Pratardana, son of Divodasa and king of Kasi, and Vasumanas, son of Rohidasva; and x.148 is declared to have had Prithi Vainya."

It will be noticed that in this list there occurs the name of Sudas as a composer of Vedic hymns.

5. Sudas performed Ashvamedha Yajna. There is reference to this in Rig Veda, iii.53.

9. "The great *RISHI*, the generator of the gods, attracted by the deities, the overlooker of the leaders (at holy rites), VISHVA-MITRA arrested the watery stream when he sacrificed for SUDAS; INDRA with the *Kushikas*, was pleased."

11. "Approach, *Kushikas*, the steed of SUDAS; animate (him), and let him loose to (win) riches (for the raja); for the king (of the gods), has slain VRITRA in the East, in the West, in the North, therefore let (SUDAS) worship him in the best (regions) of the earth."

6. Sudas was known for charity to the Brahmins who called him Atithigva (the doyen) of Philanthropists. How the Brahmins have praised him for his philanthropy appears from the following references in the Rig Veda:

i.47.6. "O, impetuous Ashvins, possessing wealth in your car, bring sustenance to Sudas. Send to us from the (aerial) ocean, or the sky, the riches which are much coveted."

i.63.7. "Thou didst then, O,thundering Indra, war against, and shatter, the seven cities for Purukutsa, when thou, O king, didst without effort hurl away distress from Sudas like a bunch of grass, and bestow wealth on Puru."

i. 112.19. "Come, O Ashvins, with those succours whereby ye brought glorious power to Sudas."

vii. 19.3. "Though, O fierce Indra, hast impetuously protected Sudas, who offered oblations, with every kind of succour. Thou hast preserved Trasadasyu the son of Purukutsa, and Puru in his conquest of land and in his slaughter of enemies."

vii.20.2 "Indra growing in force slays Vritra; the hero protects him who praises him; he makes room for Sudas (or the liberal sacrificer- Sayana); he gives riches repeatedly to his worshippers."

vii.25.3. "Let a hundred succours come to Sudas, a thousand desirable (gifts) and prosperity. Destroy the weapon of the murderous. Confer renown and wealth on us."

vii.32.10. "No one can oppose or stop the chariot of Sudas. He whom Indra, whom the Marutas, protect, walks in a pasture filled with cattle."

vii.53.3. "And ye, O, Heaven and Earth, have many gifts of wealth for Sudas."

vii.60.8. "Since Aditi, Mitra, and Varuna, afford secure protection to Sudas (or the liberal man), bestowing on him offspring—may we not, O mighty deities, commit any offence against the gods ... May Aryaman rid us of our enemies. (Grant) ye vigorous gods, a wide space to Sudas."

These are the biographical bits regarding Pajavana referred to in the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata gleaned from the most authentic source, namely, the Rig Veda. From the Rig Veda, we know that his real name was Sudas, that he was a Kshatriya. He was more than a Kshatriya. He was a king and a mighty king. To this, the Mahabharata adds a fresh and a new detail, namely that he was a Shudra. A Shudra to be an Aryan, a Shudra to be a Kshatriya and a Shudra to be a king!! Can there be a greater revelation? Can there be anything more revolutionary?

This search for biographical details may be closed with a discussion of three important questions: .Was Sudas an Aryan? If Sudas is,an Aryan what is the tribe to which he belonged? If Sudas is a Shudra, what does Shudra signify?

It might be well to begin with the second. For the determination of this question it is possible to derive some assistance from certain reference in the Rig Veda. The Rig Veda mentions many tribes, most important of which are Tritsus, Bharatas, Turvasas, Durhyus, Yadus, Purus and Anus. But according to the references in the Rig Veda there are only three with whom Sudas was connected. They are Purus, Tritsus and the Bharatas. It is enough to confine ourselves to these three and to find out if possible to which of these tribes he belonged. The most important stanzas bearing on the relation between Tritsus and Sudas are the Rig Veda, i.63.7; i. 130.7; vii.18.15; vii.33.5;vii.33.6; vii.83:4,6.

In i.63,7,Divodasa is spoken of as the king of the Purus and in i.130.7, Divodasa is spoken of as Paurve, i.e., belonging to the Purus.

Rig Veda,vii.18.15 and vii.83.6, suggest that Sudas was not a Tritsu. The first suggests that Sudas raided the camp of Tritsus who ran away and Sudas took possession of their wealth. The second suggests that Tritsus and Sudas were on one side in the war against the ten kings, but they are shown as separate. But in vii.35.5 and in vii.83.4, Sudas becomes fully identified with Tritsus; indeed, in the former Sudas becomes a king of the Tritsus.

On this question of the relation between the Tritsus and the Bharatas and between them and Sudas, we have as our evidence Rig Veda, vii.33.6 and v. 16.4, 6, 19. According to the first, Tritsus are the same as the Bharatas. According to the second, Divodasa the father of Sudas is spoken of as belonging to the Bharatas.

From these references one thing is certain that the Purus, Tritsus and Bharatas were either different branches of one and the same folk or that they were different tribes, who in the course of time became one people, folk. This is not impossible. The only question is: assuming they were different, to whom did Sudas originally belong? To the Purus, the Tritsus or to the Bharatas? Having regard to the connection of the Purus and the Bharatas with Divodasa, his father, it seems natural to suppose that Sudas originally belonged either to the Purus or to the, Bharatas—which, is difficult to say.

Whether he belonged to the Purus or not, there is no doubt that Sudas belonged to the Bharatas if regard is had to the fact that his father Divodasa is spoken of as belonging to the Bharatas. The next question is: who were these Bharatas and whether they are the people after whom India got the name Bharata Bhumi or the land of the Bharatas. This question is important because most people are not aware of the true facts. When Hindus talk of the Bharatas they have in mind the Daushyanti Bharatas, Bharatas descended from Dushyanta and Shakuntala and who fought the war which is described in the Mahabharata. Not only are they not aware of any other Bharatas but they believe that the name Bharata Bhumi which was given to India was given after the Daushyanti Bharatas.

There are two Bharatas quite distinct from each other. One tribe of the Bharatas are the Bharatas of the Rig Veda, who were descended from Manu and to whom Sudas belonged. The other tribe of Bharatas are the Daushyanti Bharatas. What is more important is that if India has been named Bharata Bhumi it is after the Bharatas of the Rig Veda and not after the Daushyanti Bharatas. This is made clear by the following stanzas from the Bhagavata Purana:

Priyamvadho nama sutho manoh swayambhuvasya ha !

Thasyagnigrasthatho nabhitrishbhashcha suthasthathah !!

Avatheerana putrashatham thasyasidrahaychaparagham !

Vikyatham varshamethaghyannaamnaa bharathamuthapram !!

"Manu, the son of Syavambhu, had a son named Priyamvada; his son was Agnidhra: his son was Nabhi: he had a son Rishabha. He had a hundred sons born to him, all learned in the Veda; of them, Bharata was the eldest, devoted to Narayana, by whose name this excellent land is known as Bharata."

This shows to what illustrious line of kings this Shudra Sudas belonged.

The next thing to find out is whether Sudas was an Aryan. The Bharatas were of course Aryans and therefore Sudas must have been an Aryan. If reference is had to Rig Veda, vii. 18.7, this connection with the Tritus to the Aryans seems to throw some doubt on his Aryan origin. This stanza says that Indra rescued the cows of the Aryas from the Tritus and killed the Tritus, thereby suggesting that the Tritus were the enemies of the Aryas. Griffiths is very much perturbed by the Tritus being shown as non-Aryans which is the result of a literal translation of the stanza, and to avoid it he understands cows to mean comrade. This of course is unnecessary if one bears in mind that the Rig Veda contains the story of two sorts of Aryas, whether differing in race or religion, it is difficult to say. Interpreted in the light of this fact, all that the stanza means is that at the time when it was written the Tritus had not become Aryans by religion. It does not mean that they were not Aryans by race. It is therefore indisputable that Sudas, whether taken as a Bharata or as a Tritus was an Aryan.

And now to the last question, though it is by no means the least. What does Shudra signify? In the light of this new discovery that Sudas was a Shudra, the word now stands in a totally different light. To old scholars to whom the word was just the name of a servile and aboriginal class this new discovery must come as a surprise for which their past researches cannot possibly furnish an answer. As for myself, I am in no better position. The reason is that the social organisation of the Vedic Aryans has-yet to be studied. We know from the study of primitive societies that they are organised in groups and they act as groups. The groups are of various sorts. There are clans, phratries, moieties and tribes. In some cases, the tribe is the primary unit, in others it is the clan, in others the phratry. In some cases tribes are sub-divided into clans. In other cases there are no clans. It is a single clanless tribe.

The clan embraces the descendants of a single ancestor held together by a sense of common descent. Clans often become associated through common social and ceremonial interests into major units, called phratries or brotherhoods of clans. The bond within the phratry may be relatively loose, that is, the association may not imply more than an informal feeling of preferential friendship. The phratry may become a moiety in which each clan is recognised as part of one of two major units. But moieties may occur without any sub-division, that is, the entire clan may consist of two clans. All these organisations whether it is a clan, a phratry, a moiety or a tribe, are all based on the tie of kinship.

The Vedic Aryans had no doubt some such forms of social organisation. That is clear from the nomenclature. As pointed out by Prof. Senart :

"The Vedic hymns are all too indefinite concerning the details of external

and social life. We at least see from them that the Aryan population was divided into a number of tribes or small peoples (*janas*), subdivided into clans united by the ties of kinship (*visas*), which in their turn were split up into families. The terminology of the Rig Veda, is in this respect somewhat indecisive, but the general fact is clear. *Sajata*, that is to say, kinsman' or 'fellow in *Jati*,' of race, seems in the Atharva-Veda to denote fellow in clan (*vis*). *Jana*, which assumes a wider significance, recalls the Avestic equivalent of the clan, the *zantu*, and the *jati* or caste. A series of terms, *vra*, *vrijana*, *vraja*, *vrata*, appear to be synonyms or subdivisions either of the clan or of the tribes. The Aryan population then lived, at the epoch to which the hymns refer, under the rule of an organisation dominated by the traditions of the tribe and the lower or similar groupings. The very variety of names indicates that - this organisation was somewhat unsettled."

We have, however, no information to determine which of these corresponds to the clan, which to the phratry and which to the tribe. That being so, it is difficult to say whether Shudra was the name of a clan, a phratry or a tribe. It is, however, interesting to refer to the view of Prof. Weber when he comments on the passage from the Satapatha Brahmana (i.1.4.12) where it says that different modes of address should be adopted inviting the sacrificer to proceed with the sacrifice, addressing him as 'come' if he is a Brahmin, 'hasten hither' if he is a Kshatriya, 'hasten hither' if he is a Vaishya and 'run hither' if he is a Shudra. Prof. Weber says :

"The entire passage is of great importance, as it shows (in opposition to what Roth says in the first Volume of this Journal, p. 83) that the Shudras were then admitted to the holy sacrifices of the Aryans, and understood their speech, even if they did not speak it. The latter point cannot certainly be assumed as a necessary consequence, but it is highly probable and I consequently incline to the view of those who regard the Shudras as an Aryan tribe which immigrated into India before the others."

His conclusion that the Shudras were Aryans hits the nail squarely on the head. The only point of doubt is whether the Shudras were a tribe. That they were Aryans and Kshatriyas is beyond doubt.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NUMBER OF VARNAS, THREE OR FOUR ?

THAT there were from the very beginning four *Varnas* in the Indo-Aryan society is a view which is universally accepted by all classes of Hindus, and also by European scholars. If the thesis advanced in the last chapter, namely, that the Shudras were Kshatriyas is accepted, then it follows that this theory is wrong and that there was a time when there were only three *Varnas* in the

Indo-Aryan society, viz.. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Thus, the thesis, while it solves one problem, at the same time creates another. Whether anybody else sees the importance of this problem or not, I do. Indeed, I am aware of the fact that unless I succeed in proving that there were originally only three *Varnas*, my thesis that the Shudras were Kshatriyas may not be said to be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt.

While it is unfortunate that I should have landed on a thesis, which, while holding out a promise of solving the problem, creates another, I feel fortunate in having strong and cogent evidence to show that there were originally only three *Varnas* among the Indo-Aryans.

The first piece of evidence I rely upon is that of the Rig Veda itself. There are some scholars who maintain that the Varna system did not exist in the age of the Rig Veda. This statement is based on the view that the Purusha Sukta is an interpolation which has taken place long after the Rig Veda was closed. Even accepting that the Purusha Sukta is a later interpolation, it is not possible to accept the statement that the Varna system did not exist in the time of the Rig Veda. Such a system is in open conflict with the text of the Rig Veda. For, the Rig Veda, apart from the Purusha Sukta, does mention Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas not once but many times. The Brahmins are mentioned as a separate *Varna* fifteen times, Kshatriyas nine times. What is important is that the Rig Veda does not mention Shudra as a separate *Varna*. If Shudras were a separate *Varna* there is no reason why the Rig Veda should not have mentioned them. The true conclusion to be drawn from the Rig Veda is not that the Varna system did not exist, but that there were only three *Varnas* and that Shudras were not regarded as a fourth and a separate *Varna*.

The second piece of evidence I rely on is the testimony of the two Brahmanas, the Satapatha and the Taittiriya. Both speak of the creation of three *Varnas* only. They do not speak of the creation of the Shudras as a separate.

The Satapatha Brahmana says :*

11.1.4.11.— "(Uttering), 'butgh', Prajapati generated this earth. (Uttering) 'bhuvah' he generated the air, and (Uttering) 'svah' he generated the sky. This universe is co-extensive with these worlds. (The fire) is placed with the whole. Saying 'bhuh', Prajapati generated the Brahman; saying 'bhuvah', he generated the Kshattra; (and saying) 'svah', he generated the Vis. The fire is placed with the whole. (Saying) 'bhuh', Prajapati generated himself; (saying) 'bhuvah', he generated offspring : saying 'svah', he generated animals. This world is so much as self, offspring, and animals. (The fire) is placed with the whole."

The Taittiriya Brahmana says :

111.12.9.2.— "This entire (universe) has been created by Brahma. Men say that the Vaishya class was produced from *ric* verses. They say that the Yajur Veda is the womb from which the Kshatriya was born. The Sama Veda is the source from which the Brahmins sprang. This word the ancients declared to the ancients."

Here is my evidence. It consists of an inference from the Rig Veda and two statements from two Brahmanas which in point of authority are co-equal with the Vedas. For both are Shruti both say in definite and precise terms that there were only three *Varnas*. Both agree that the Shudras did not form a separate and a distinct *Varna*, much less the fourth *Varna*. There cannot, therefore, be better evidence in support of my contention that there were originally only three *Varnas* that the Shudras were only a part of the second *Varna*.

II

Such is my evidence. On the other side, there is, of course, the evidence contained in the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, which maintains that there were four *Varnas* from the very beginning. The question now is : which of the two should be accepted as the correct? How is this question to be decided? It cannot be decided by applying the rules of Mimamsa. If we did apply it, we will have to admit that both the statements, one in the Purusha Sukta that there were four *Varnas* and the statement in the two Brahmanas that there were three *Varnas*, are true. This is an absurd position. We must decide this matter in the light of the canons of historical criticism, such as sequence of time and intrinsic criticism, etc. The main question is whether the Purusha Sukta is a later composition added to the original Rig Veda. The question has been dealt with on the basis of the language of the Sukta as compared with the language of the rest of the Rig Veda. That it is a late production is the opinion of all scholars. This is what Colebrooke says :

"That remarkable hymn (the Purusha Sukta) is in language, metre, and style, very different from the rest of the prayers with which it is associated. It has a decidedly more modern tone; and must have been composed after the Sanskrit language had been refined, and its grammar and rhythm perfected. The internal evidence which it furnishes serves to demonstrate the important fact that the compilation of the Vedas, in their present arrangement, took place after the Sanskrit tongue had advanced from the rustic and irregular dialect in which the multitude of hymns and prayers of the Veda was composed, to the polished and sonorous language in which the mythological poems, sacred and profane (puranas and kavyas), have been written."

In the opinion of Prof. Max Muller :

"There can be little doubt, for instance, that the 90th hymn of the 10th book... is modern both in its character and in its diction. It is full of allusions to the sacrificial ceremonies, it uses technically philosophical terms, it mentions the three seasons in the order of Vasanta, spring, Grishma, summer and Sharad, autumn; it contains the only passage in the Rig Veda where the four castes are enumerated. The evidence of language for the modern date of this composition is equally strong. Grishma, for instance, the name for the hot season, does not occur in any other hymn of the Rig Veda; and Vasanta also, the name of spring does not belong to the earliest vocabulary of the Vedic poets. It occurs but once more in the Rig Veda (x. 161.4), in a passage where the three seasons are mentioned in the order of Sharad, autumn; Hemanta, winter; and Vasanta, spring."

Prof. Weber observes :

"That the Purusha Sukta, considered as a hymn of the Rig Veda, is among the latest portions of that collection, is clearly perceptible from its contents. The fact that the Sama Samhita has not adopted any verse from it, is not without importance (compare what I have remarked in my Academical Prelections). The Naigeya school, indeed, appears (although it is not quite certain) to have extracted the first five verses in the seventh prapathaka of the first Archika, which is peculiar to it."

III

This is one line of argument. There is also another line of argument which also helps us to determine whether the Purusha Sukta is an earlier or later production. For this it is necessary to find out how many Samhitas of the Vedas have adopted the Purusha Sukta. Examining the different Vedas and the Samhitas, the position is as follows:

The Sama Veda produces only 5 verses from the Purusha Sukta. As to the White Yajur Veda, the Vajasaneyi Samhita includes it but the difference between the two is great. The Purusha Sukta, as it stands, in the Rig Veda, has only 16 verses. But the Purusha Sukta in the Vajasaneyi Samhita has 22 verses. Of the Black Yajur Veda there are three Samhitas available at present. But none of the three Samhitas, the Taittiriya, the Katha and the Maitrayani, gives any place to the Purusha Sukta. The Atharva Veda is the only Veda which contains a more or less exact reproduction of the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda.

The text of the Purusha Sukta, as it occurs in the different Vedas, is not uniform. The six additional verses of the Vajasaneyi Samhita are special to it and are not to be found in the text as it occurs in the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda or the Atharva Veda. There is another difference which relates to verse 16. The 16th verse of the Rig Veda is to be found neither in the Atharva Veda nor in the Sama Veda nor in the Yajur Veda. Similarly, the 16th verse of the Atharva Veda is to be found neither in the Rig Veda nor in the Yajur Veda. Of the fifteen verses, which are common to the three Vedas, their texts are not identical. Nor is the order in which the verses stand in the three Vedas the same as may be seen from the following table :

<i>Yajur Veda</i>	<i>Rig Veda</i>	<i>Sama Veda</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
1	1	3	1
2	2	5	4
3	3	6	3
4	4	4	2
5	5	7	9
6	8	*	10
7	9	*	11
8	10	*	14
9	7	*	13
10	11	*	12
11	12	*	5
12	13	*	6
13	14	*	7
14	6	*	8
15	15	*	15
16	16	*	16
17		*	*
18	*	*	*
19	*	*	*
20	*	*	*
21	*	*	*
22	*	*	*

* Means that these Verses are not to be found.

The point is that if the Purusha Sukta had been an old, hoary text, sanctified by ancient tradition, could the other Vedas have taken such a liberty with it? Could they have changed it and chopped it as they have done?

The place of the Purusha Sukta in the hymns of the different Vedas is also very significant. In the Rig Veda it occurs in the miscellaneous part and in the Atharva Veda it occurs in what is known as the supplementary part. If it was the earliest composition of the Rig Veda, why should it have been placed in such inconsequential collection? What do these points suggest? They suggest that :

- (1) If the Purusha Sukta was not incorporated in the Taittiriya, Kathaka and Maitrayani Samhitas of the Black Yajur Veda, it follows, that the Purusha Sukta was added to the Rig Veda after the Taittiriya Samhita, the Kathaka Samhita, the Maitrayana Samhita of the Black Yajur Veda.
- (2) That it had to be put in the miscellaneous and supplementary portions of the Vedas shows that it was composed at a later stage.
- (3) That the freedom which the authors of the different Samhitas took in adding, omitting and recording the verses shows that they did not regard it as an ancient hymn, which they were bound to reproduce in its exact original form.

These points go a long way in furnishing corroborative evidence in support of the views held by Prof. Max Muller and others that the Purusha Sukta is a later interpolation.

IV

The difference in the form of the stanzas in the Purusha Sukta is also very noteworthy. Anyone who reads the Purusha Sukta will find that except for these two verses, viz., 11 and 12, the whole of it is in the narrative form. But the two verses, which explain the origin of the four Varnas, are in the form of question and answer. The point is : Why should these verses be introduced in a question form breaking the narrative form? The only explanation is that the writer wanted to introduce a new matter and in a pointed manner. This means that not only the Purusha Sukta is a later addition to the Rig Veda, but these particular verses are much later than even the Purusha Sukta.

Some critics have gone to the length of saying that the Purusha Sukta is a forgery by the Brahmins to bolster up their claim to superiority. Priests are known to have committed many forgeries. The Donations of Constantine and Pseudo-Isidore Decretals are well known forgeries in the history of the Papacy. The Brahmins of India were not free from such machinations. How they changed the original word 'Agre' into 'Agne' to make Rig Veda give support to the burning of widows has been pointed out by no less an authority than Prof. Max, Muller. It is well-known how in the time of the East India Company a whole Smriti was fabricated to support the case of a plaintiff. There is, therefore, nothing surprising if the Brahmins did forge the Purusha Sukta, if not the whole, at least the two versus 11 and 12, at some later stage, long after the

fourth *Varna* had come into being, with a view to give the system of *Chaturvarnya* the sanction of the Veda.

V

Is the Purusha Sukta earlier than the Brahmanas? This question is distinct and separate from the first. It may be that the Purusha Sukta belongs to the later part of the Rig Veda. Yet, if the Rig Veda as a whole is earlier than the Brahmanas, the Purusha Sukta would still be earlier than the Brahmanas. The question, therefore, needs to be separately considered.

It is Prof. Max Muller's view that in the growth of the Vedic literature the order was Vedas, then Brahmanas and thereafter the Sutras. If this proposition was adopted, it would mean that the Purusha Sukta must be earlier than the Brahmanas. Question is : Can Prof. Max Muller's proposition be accepted as absolute? If it was accepted as absolute, the proposition would lead to two conclusions:

- (1) That in the time of the Rig Veda there were four *Varnas* and at the time of the Satapatha Brahmana they became three; or
- (2) that the tradition is not completely recorded in the Satapatha Brahmana.

It is obvious that both these conclusions are absurd and must be rejected. The first is absurd on the face of it. The second is untenable because the theory of the evolution of *Varnas* by the two Brahmanas is different from that set out in the Purusha Sukta and is complete in itself. The absurdity of the result is inevitable if one were to take Max Muller's proposition as absolute. The proposition cannot be taken as absolute to mean that no Brahmana was composed until all the Samhitas had come into being. On the other hand, it is quite possible as pointed out by Professors Belvalkar and Ranade that most of these compositions are composite and synchronous and, therefore, one part of the Vedas can be earlier than another part and that a part of the Brahmanas can be earlier than parts of the Vedas. If this is a correct view then there is nothing inherently improbable in holding that the parts of the Satapatha Brahmana and of the Taittiriya Brahmana, which record the legend that there were at one time only three *Varnas*, are earlier than the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda.

What is the conclusion which follows from this examination of the Purusha Sukta? There is only one conclusion, that the Sukta is an addition to the Rig Veda made at a later stage and is, therefore, no argument that there were four *Varnas* from the very beginning of the Aryan Society.

For the reasons given above, it will be seen that my thesis about the origin of the Shudras' creates no problem such as the one mentioned in the beginning of

this Chapter. If it did appear to create a problem, it was because of the assumption that the Purusha Sukta was an authentic and genuine record of what it purports to say. That assumption has now been shown to be quite baseless. I, therefore, see no difficulty in concluding that there was a time when the Aryan Society had only three *Varnas* and the Shudras belonged to the second or the Kshatriya *Varna*.

CHAPTER IX BRAHMINS VERSUS SHUDRAS

THE thesis that the Shudras were Kshatriyas and that if they became the fourth *Varna* it was because they were degraded to that position does not wholly solve the problem. It only raises another problem. This problem is why were the Shudras degraded?

The problem is new. It has never been raised before. The existing literature on the subject cannot, therefore, be expected to contain an answer. The question is raised by me for the first time. As it is a question on which my theory of the Shudras rests, the burden of giving a satisfactory answer must rest on me. I believe, I can give a satisfactory answer to this question. My answer is that the degradation of the Shudras is the result of a violent conflict between the Shudras and the Brahmins. Fortunately for me, there is abundant evidence of it.

I

There is direct evidence of a violent conflict between the Shudra king, Sudas and Vasishtha, the Brahmin rishi. The facts relating to this conflict however are stated in a very confused manner. In the narration which follows, I have made an attempt to state them in a neat and an orderly fashion.

To understand the nature of the conflict, it is necessary first to understand the relations between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra.

Vasishtha and Vishvamitra were enemies and were enemies first and enemies last. There was no incident to which one of them was a party in which the other did not know himself as an opponent. As evidence of their enmity, I will refer to some of the episodes. The first one is that of Satyavrata otherwise called Trishanku. The story as told in the *Harivamsha** is as follows:

"Meanwhile Vasishtha, from the relation subsisting between the king (Satyavrata's father) and himself, as disciple and spiritual preceptor, governed the city of Ayodhya, the country, and the interior apartments of the royal palace. But Satyavrata, whether thorough folly or the force of destiny, cherished constantly an increased indignation against Vasishtha, who for a (proper) reason had not interposed to prevent his exclusion from the royal power by his father. "The formulae of the marriage ceremonial are only

binding,' said Satyavrata, 'when the seventh step has been taken, and this had not been done when I seized the damsel; still Vasishtha, who knows the precepts of the law, does not come to my aid.' Thus Satyavrata was incensed in his mind against Vasishtha, who, however had acted from a sense of what was right. Nor did Satyavrata understand (the propriety of) that silent penance imposed upon him by his father... When he had supported this arduous rite, (he supposed that) he had redeemed his family position. The venerable muni Vasishtha did not, however, (as has been said), prevent his father from setting him aside, but resolved to install his son as king. When the powerful prince Satyavrata had endured the penance for twelve years, he beheld, when he was without flesh to eat, the milch cow of Vasishtha which yielded all objects of desire, and under the influence of anger, delusion, and exhaustion, distressed by hunger, and failing in the ten duties he slew... and both partook of her flesh himself, and gave it to Vishvamitra's sons to eat. Vasishtha hearing of this, became incensed against him and imposed on him the name of Trishanku as he had committed three sins. On his return home, Vishvamitra was gratified by the support which his wife had received, and offered Trishanku the choice of a boon. When this proposal was made, Trishanku chose his boon of ascending bodily to heaven. All apprehension from the twelve years' drought being now at an end, the muni (Vishvamitra) installed Trishanku in his father's kingdom and offered sacrifice on his behalf. The mighty Kaushika then, in spite of the resistance of the gods and of Vasishtha exalted the king alive to heaven."

The next episode in which they appear on opposite sides is that of Harishchandra, the son of Trishanku. The story is told in the Vishnu Purana and in the Markandeya Purana. The following account is given The story runs :

"On one occasion, when hunting, the king heard a sound of female lamentation which proceeded, it appears, from the sciences who were becoming mastered by the austere fervid sage Vishvamitra, in a way they had never been before by anyone else; and were consequently crying out in alarm at his superiority. For the fulfilment of his duty as a Kshatriya to defend the weak, and inspired by the god Ganesh, who had entered into him, Harishchandra exclaimed "What sinner is this who is binding fire in the hem of his garment, while I, his lord, am present, resplendent with force and fiery vigour? He shall to-day enter on his long sleep, pierced in all his limbs by arrows, which, by their discharge from my bow, illuminate all the quarters of the firmament.' Vishvamitra was provoked by this address. In consequence of his wrath the Sciences instantly perished, and Harishchandra, trembling like the leaf of an ashvattha tree, submissively represented that he had merely

done his duty as a king, which he defined as consisting in the bestowal of gifts on eminent Brahmins and other persons of slender means, the protection of the timid, and war against enemies. Vishvamitra hereupon demands a gift as a Brahmin intent upon receiving one. The king offers him whatsoever he may ask: Gold, his own son, wife, body, life, kingdom, good fortune. The saint first requires the present for the Rajasuya sacrifice. On this being promised, and still more offered, he asks for the empire of the whole earth, including everything but Harishchandra himself, his wife, and son, and his virtue which follows its possessor wherever he goes. Harishchandra joyfully agrees. Vishvamitra then requires him to strip off all his ornaments, to clothe himself in the bark of trees, and to quit the kingdom with his wife Shaivya and his son. When he is departing, the sage stops him and demands payment of his yet unpaid sacrificial fee. The king replies that he has only the persons of his wife, his son and himself left. Vishvamitra insists that he must nevertheless pay, and that unfulfilled promises of gifts to Brahmins bring destruction. The unfortunate prince, after being threatened with a curse, engages to make the payment in a month; and commences his journey with a wife unused to such fatigues, amid the universal lamentations of his subjects. While he lingers, listening to their affectionate remonstrances against his desertion of his kingdom, Vishvamitra comes up, and being incensed at the delay and the king's apparent hesitation, strikes the queen with his staff, as she is dragged on by her husband. Harishchandra then proceeded with his wife *and* little son to Benares, imagining that the divine city, as the special property of Siva, could not be possessed by any mortal. Here he found the relentless Vishvamitra waiting for him, and ready to press his demand for the payment of his sacrificial gift, even before the expiration of the full period of grace. In this extremity, Shaivya the queen suggests with a sobbing voice that her husband should sell her. On hearing this proposal Harishchandra swoons, then recovers, utters lamentations and swoons again, and his wife seeing his sad condition, swoons also. While they are in a state of unconsciousness their famished child exclaims in distress. 'O, father, give me bread; O, mother, mother, give me food; hunger overpowers me and my tongue is parched.' At this moment Vishvamitra returns, and after recalling Harishchandra to consciousness by sprinkling water over him, again urges payment of the present. The king again swoons, and is again restored. The sage threatens to curse him if his engagement is not fulfilled by sunset. Being now pressed by his wife, the king agrees to sell her, adding, however. 'If my voice can utter such a wicked word, I do what the most inhuman wretches cannot perpetrate.' He then goes into the city, and in self-accusing language offers his queen for sale as a slave. A rich old Brahmin offers to buy her at a price corresponding

to her value, to do his household work. Seeing his mother dragged away the child ran after her, his eyes dimmed with tears, and crying 'mother.' The Brahmin purchaser kicked him when he came up; but he would not let his mother go, and continued crying 'mother, mother.' The queen then said to the Brahmin, 'Be so kind, my master, as to buy also this child, as without him I shall prove to thee but a useless purchase. Be thus merciful to me in my wretchedness, unite me with my son, like a cow to her calf.' The Brahmin agrees : Take this money and give me the boy.' After the Brahmin had gone out of sight with his purchases. Vishvamitra again appeared and renewed his demands : and when the afflicted Harishchandra offered him the small sum he had obtained by the sale of his wife and son, he angrily replied. If, miserable Kshatriya, thou thinkest this a sacrificial gift befitting my deserts, thou shall soon behold the transcendent power of my ardent austere-fervour of my terrible majesty, and of my holy study,' Harishchandra promises an additional gift, and Vishvamitra allows him the remaining quarter of the day for its liquidation. On the terrified and afflicted prince offering himself for sale, in order to gain the means of meeting this cruel demand, Dharma (Righteousness) appears in the form of a hideous and offensive chandala, and agrees to buy him at his own price, large or small. Harishchandra declines such a degrading servitude, and declares that he would rather be consumed by the fire of his persecutor's curse than submit to such a fate. Vishvamitra, however, again comes on the scene, asks why he does not accept the large sum offered by the Chandala, and when he pleads in excuse his descent 'from the solar race, threatens to fulminate a curse against him if he does not accept that method of meeting his liability. Harishchandra implores that he may be spared this extreme of degradation, and offers to become Vishvamitra's slave in payment of the residue of his debt; whereupon the sage rejoins, if thou art my slave, then I sell thee as such to the Chandala for a hundred millions of money.' The Chandala, delighted pays down the money, and carries off Harishchandra bound, beaten, confused, and afflicted, to his own place of abode. Harishchandra is sent by the Chandala to steal grave clothes in a cemetery and is told that he will receive two-sixths of the value for his hire; three-sixths going to his master, and one-sixth to the king. In this horrid spot, and in this degrading occupation he spent in great misery twelve months, which seemed to him like a hundred years. He then falls asleep and has a series of dreams suggested by the life he had been leading. After he awoke, his wife came to the cemetery to perform the obsequies of their son, who had died from the bite of a serpent. At first, the husband and wife did not recognise each other, from the change in appearance which had been wrought upon them both by their miseries. Harishchandra, however,

soon discovered from the tenor of her lamentations that it is his wife, and falls into a swoon; as the queen does also when she recognises her husband. When consciousness returns they both break out into lamentations, the father bewailing in a touching strain the loss of his son, and the wife, the degradation of the king. She then falls on his neck, embraces him and asks 'whether all this is a dream, or a reality, as she is utterly bewildered'; and adds, that "if it be a reality, then righteousness is unavailing to those who practise it." After hesitating to devote himself to death on his son's funeral pyre without receiving his master's leave. Harishchandra resolves to do so, braving all the consequences and consoling himself with the hopeful anticipation. 'If I have given gifts and offered sacrifices and gratified my religious teachers, then may I be reunited with my son and with thee (my wife) in another world.' The queen determines to die in the same manner. When Harishchandra, after placing his son's body on the funeral pyre, is meditating on the Lord Hari Narayana Krishna, the supreme spirit, all the gods arrive, headed by Dharma (Righteousness), and accompanied by Vishvamitra. Dharma entreats the king to desist from his rash intention; and Indra announces to him that, he, his wife, and son have conquered heaven by their good works. Ambrosia, the antidote of death, and flowers are rained by the gods from the sky; and the king's son is restored to life and the bloom of youth. The king adorned with celestial clothing and garlands, and the queen, embrace their son. Harishchandra, however, declares that he cannot go to heaven till he has received his master the Chandala's permission, and has paid him a ransom. Dharma then reveals to the king that it was he himself who had miraculously assumed the form of a Chandala. The king next objects that he cannot depart unless his faithful subjects, who are sharers in his merits, are allowed to accompany him to heaven, at least for one day. This request is granted by Indra; and after Vishvamitra has inaugurated Rohitashva the king's son to be his successor. Harishchandra, his friends and followers, all ascend in company to heaven. Even after this great consummation, however, Vasishtha, the family priest of Harishchandra, hearing, at the end of a twelve years' abode in the waters of the Ganges, an account of all that has occurred, becomes vehemently incensed at the humiliation inflicted on the excellent monarch, whose virtues and devotion to the gods and Brahmins he celebrates, declares that his indignation had not been so greatly roused even when his own hundred sons had been slain by Vishvamitra, and in the following words dooms the latter to be transformed into a crane : 'Wherefore that wicked man, enemy of the Brahmins, smitten by my curse, shall be expelled from the society of intelligent beings, and losing his understanding shall be transformed into a Baka.' Vishvamitra reciprocates

the curse, and changes Vasishtha into a bird of the species called Ari. In their new shapes the two have a furious fight, the Ari being of the Portentous height of two thousand yojanas= 18,000 miles, and the Baka of 3090 yojanas. They first assail each other with their wings; then the Baka smites his antagonist in the same manner, while the Ari strikes with his talons. Falling mountains, overturned by the blasts of wind raised by the flapping of their wings, shake the whole earth, the waters of the ocean overflow, the earth itself, thrown off its perpendicular slopes downwards to Patala, the lower regions. Many creatures perished by these various convulsions. Attracted by the dire disorder, Brahma arrives, attended by all the gods, on the spot, and commands the combatants to desist from their fray. They were too fiercely infuriated to regard this injunction; but Brahma put an end to the conflict by restoring them to their natural forms and counselling them to be reconciled."

The next episode in which they came in as opponents is connected with Ambarisha, king of Ayodhya :

"The story relates that Ambarisha was engaged in performing a sacrifice, when Indra carried away the victim. The priest said that this ill-omened event had occurred owing to the king's bad administration; and would call for a great expiation, unless a human victim could be produced. After a long search the royal-rishi (Ambarisha) came upon the Brahmin rishi, Richika, a descendant of Bhrgu, and asked him to sell one of his sons for a victim, at the price of a hundred thousand cows. Richika answered that he would not sell his eldest son and his wife added that she would not sell the youngest; 'youngest sons' she observed, 'being generally the favourites of their mothers.' The second son, Shunasshepa, then said that in that case he regarded himself as the one who was to be sold, and desired the king to remove him. The hundred thousand cows, with ten millions of gold pieces and heaps of jewels, were paid down and Shunasshepa carried away. As they were passing through Pushkara, Shunasshepa beheld his maternal uncle Vishvamitra who was engaged in austerities there with other rishis, threw himself into his arms, and implored his assistance, urging his orphan, friendless and helpless state, as claims on the sage's benevolence. Vishvamitra soothed him; and pressed his own sons to offer themselves as victims in the room of Shunasshepa. This proposition met with no favour from Madhushyanda and the other sons of the royal hermit, who answered with haughtiness and derision: 'How is it that thou sacrificest thine own sons and seekest to rescue those of others? We look upon this as wrong, and like the eating of one's own flesh. 'The sage was exceedingly wroth at this disregard of his injunction, and doomed his sons to be born in the most degraded classes, like Vasishtha's sons, and to eat dog's flesh, for a

thousand years. He then said to Shunasshepa: 'When thou art bound with hallowed cords, decked with a red arland, and anointed with unguents and fastened to the sacrificial post of Vishnu, then address thyself to Agni, and sing these two divine verses (gathas), at the sacrifice of Ambarisha: then shall thou attain the fulfilment (of thy desire)'. Being furnished with the two gathas, Shunasshepa proposed at once to king Ambarisha that they should set out for their destination. When bound at the stake to be immolated, dressed in a red garment, he celebrated the two gods, Indra and his younger brother (Vishnu), with the excellent verses. The thousand-eyed (Indra) was pleased with the secret hymn; and bestowed long life on Shunasshepa."

The last episode recorded in which the two had ranged themselves on opposite sides is connected with king Kalmashapada. The episode is recorded in the Adi Parvan of the Mahabharata:

"Kalmashapada was a king of the race of Ikshvaku. Vishvamitra wished to be employed by him as his officiating priest; but the king preferred Vasishtha. It happened however that the king went out to hunt, and after having killed a large quantity of games, he became very much fatigued, as well as hungry and thirsty. Meeting Shakti, the eldest of Vasishtha's hundred sons, on the road, he ordered him to get out of his way. The priest civilly replied: 'The path is mine, O king; this is the immemorial law; in all observations the king must cede the way to the Brahmin.' Neither party would yield, and the dispute waxing warmer, the king struck the muni with his whip. The muni, resorting to the usual expedient of offended sages, by a curse doomed the king to become a man-eater. It happened that at that time enmity existed between Vishvamitra and Vasishtha on account of their respective claims to be priest to Kalmashapada. Vishvamitra had followed the king; and approached while he was disputing with Shakti. Perceiving, however, the son of his rival Vasishtha, Vishvamitra made himself invisible, and passed them, catching this opportunity. The king began to implore Shakti's clemency; but Vishvamitra wishing to prevent their reconciliation, commanded a Rakshasa (a man-devouring demon) to enter into the king. Owing to the conjoint influence of the Brahman-rishi's curse, and Vishvamitra's command, the demon obeyed the injunction. Perceiving that his object was gained, Vishvamitra left things to take their course, and absented himself from the country. The king having happened to meet a hungry Brahmin, and sent him, by the hand of his cook (who could procure nothing else), some human flesh to eat, was cursed by him also to the same effect as by Shakti. The curse, being now augmented in force, took effect, and Shakti himself was the first victim, being eaten up by the king. The same fate befell all the other sons of

Vasishtha at the instigation of Vishvamitra. Perceiving Shakti to be dead, Vishvamitra again and again incited the Rakshasa against the sons of Vasishtha and accordingly the furious demon devoured those of his sons who were younger than Shakti as a lion eats up the small beasts of the forest. On hearing the destruction of his sons by Vishvamitra, Vasishtha supported his affliction as the great mountain sustains the earth. He meditated his own destruction, but never thought of exterminating the Kaushikas. This divine sage hurled himself from the summit of Meru, but fell upon the rocks as if on a heap of cotton. Escaping alive from his fall, he entered a glowing fire in the forest; but the fire, though fiercely blazing, not only failed to burn him, but seemed perfectly cool. He next threw himself into the sea with a heavy stone attached to his neck; but was cast up by the waves on the dry land. He then went home to his hermitage; but seeing it empty and desolate, he was again overcome by grief and sent out and seeing the river Vipasa which was swollen by the recent rains, and sweeping along many trees torn from its banks, he conceived the design of drowning himself into its waters; he accordingly tied himself firmly with cords, and threw himself in; but the river severing his bonds, deposited him unbound (Vipasa) on dry land; whence the name of the stream, as imposed by the sage. He afterwards saw and threw himself into the dreadful Satadru (Sutlej), which was full of alligators, etc., and derived its name rushing away in a hundred directions on seeing the Brahmin brilliant as fire. In consequence of this, he was once more stranded; and seeing that he could not kill himself, he went back to his hermitage."

There are particular instances in which Vasishtha and Vishvamitra had come into conflict with each other. But there was more than these occasional conflicts between the two. There was general enmity between them. This general enmity was of a mortal kind so much so that Vishvamitra wanted even to murder Vasishtha as will be seen from the Shalyaparvan of the Mahabharata. Says the author of the Mahabharata :

"There existed a great enmity, arising from rivalry in their austerities, between Vishvamitra and the Brahmin rishi Vasishtha. Vasishtha had an extensive hermitage in Sthanutirtha, to the east of which was Vishvamitra's. These two great ascetics were every day exhibiting intense emulation in regard to their respective austerities. But Vishvamitra beholding the might of Vasishtha was the most chagrined; and fell into deep thought. The idea of this sage, constant in duty, was the following : This river Sarasvati will speedily bring to me on her current the austere Vasishtha, the most eminent of all utterers of prayers. When that most excellent Brahmin has come, I shall most assuredly kill him.' Having thus determined, the divine sage Vishvamitra, his eyes reddened by anger, called to mind the chief of rivers. She being thus the

subject of his thoughts became very anxious, as she knew him to be very powerful and very irascible. Then trembling, pallid and with joined hands, the Saraswati stood before the chief of munis like a woman whose husband has been slain; she was greatly distressed, and said to him 'what shall I do?' The incensed muni replied, 'Bring Vasishtha hither speedily, that I may slay him.' The lotus-eyed goddess, joining her hands trembled in great fear, like a creeping plant agitated by the wind. Vishvamitra, however, although he saw her condition, repeated his command. The Saraswati, who knew how sinful was his design, and that the might of Vasishtha was unequalled, went trembling and in great dread of being cursed by both the sages, to Vasishtha and told him what his rival had said. Vasishtha seeing her emaciated, pale and anxious, spoke thus. Deliver thyself, o chief of rivers; carry me unhesitatingly to Vishvamitra, lest he curse thee.' Hearing these words of the merciful sage, the Saraswati considered how she could act most wisely. She reflected, 'Vasishtha has always shown me great kindness, I must seek his welfare.' Then observing the Kaushika sage praying and sacrificing on her brink, she regarded that as a good opportunity, *and* swept away the bank by the force of her current. In this way the son of Mitra and Varuna (Vasishtha) was carried down; and while he was being borne along, he thus celebrated the river. Thou, o Saraswati, issuest from the lake of Brahma, and pervadest the whole world with thy excellent streams. Residing in the sky, thou dischargest water into the clouds. Thou alone art all waters. By thee we study.' Thou art nourishment, radiance, fame, perfection, intellect, light. Thou art speech, thou art svaha; this world is subject to thee. Thou, in fourfold form, dwellest in all creatures.' Beholding Vasishtha brought near by the Saraswati, Vishvamitra searched for a weapon with which to make an end of him. Perceiving his anger, and dreading lest Brahmanicide should ensue, the river promptly carried away, Vasishtha in an easterly direction thus fulfilling the commands of both sages, but eluding Vishvamitra. Seeing Vasishtha so carried away. Vishvamitra, impatient and enraged by vexation, said to her, 'Since thou, o chief of rivers, has eluded me, and hast receded, roll in waves of blood acceptable to the chief of demons' (which are fabled to gloat on blood). The Saraswati being thus cursed, flowed for a year in a stream mingled with blood. Rakshasas came to the place of pilgrimage where Vasishtha had been swept away, and revelled in drinking to satiety the bloody stream in security, dancing and laughing, as if they had conquered heaven. Some rishis who arrived at the spot some time after were horrified to see the blood-stained water, and the Rakshasas quaffing it, and made the most strenuous efforts to rescue the Saraswati."

The enmity between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra was not an enmity between

two priests. It was an enmity between a Brahmin priest and a Kshatriya priest. Vasishtha was a Brahmin. Vishvamitra was a Kshatriya. He was a Kshatriya of royal lineage. In the Rig Veda (iii.33.11) Vishvamitra is spoken of as the son of Klishika. The Vishnu Purana gives further details about Vishvamitra. It says that Vishvamitra was the son of Gadhi who was descended from king Pururavas. This is confirmed by the Harivamsha. From the Rig Veda (iii :1 : 21) we know that the family of Vishvamitra has been keeping 'fire' kindled in every generation. We also know from the Rig Veda that Vishvamitra was the author of many hymns of that Veda and was admitted to be a Rajarishi. He was the author of the hymn which is held to be the holiest in the whole of the Vedas namely the Gayatri hymn in the Rig Veda (iii.62.10). Another important fact we know about him is that he was a Kshatriya and his family belonged to the clan of the Bharatas.

It seems that about this time a dispute was going on between Brahmins and Kshatriyas on the following points :

- (1) The right to receive gifts. Gift means payment made without work. The contention of the Brahmins was that nobody could receive gifts. To receive gifts was the right of the Brahmins *only*.
- (2) The right to teach the Vedas. The Brahmins' contention was that the Kshatriya had only the right to study the Vedas. He had no right to teach the Vedas. It was the privilege of the Brahmins only.
- (3) The right to officiate at a sacrifice. On this point the Brahmins' contention was that Kshatriya had the right to perform sacrifices, but he had no right to officiate as a purohit (priest) at a sacrifice. That was the privilege of the Brahmins.

What is important to note is that even in disputes on these points and particularly on the third point they did not fail to play their part as the opponents of each other. This is confirmed by the story of Trishanku narrated in the Ramayana and which runs as follows:

"King Trishanku, one of Ikshvaku's descendants, had conceived the design of celebrating a sacrifice by virtue of which he should ascend bodily to heaven. As Vasishtha on being summoned, declared that the thing was impossible (*asakyam*), Trishanku travelled to the south, where the sage's hundred sons were engaged in austerities, and applied to them to do what their father had declined. Though he addressed them with the greatest reverence and humility, and added that the Ikshvakus regarded their family-priests as their highest resource in difficulties, and that, after their father, he himself looked to them as his tutelary deities,' he received from the haughty priests the following rebuke for his presumption : "Fool, thou hast been refused by the truth-speaking preceptor. How is it that, disregarding his

authority thou hast resorted to another school (shakha)? The family-priest is the highest oracle of all the Ikshvakus; and the command of that veracious personage cannot be transgressed. Vasishtha, the divine rishi, has declared that 'the thing cannot be : ' how can we undertake the sacrifice? Thou art foolish, king; return to thy capital. The divine (Vasishtha) is competent to act as priest of the three works; how can we shew him disrespect?"

Trishanku then gave them to understand, that as his preceptor and "his preceptor's sons had declined compliance with his requests, he should think of some other expedient "In consequence of his venturing to express this presumptuous intention, they condemned him by their imprecation to become a Chandala. As this curse soon took effect, and the unhappy king's form was changed into that of a degraded outcast, he resorted to Vishvamitra (who, as we have seen, was also dwelling at this period in the south), enlarging on his own virtues and piety, and bewailing his fate. Vishvamitra commiserated his condition and promised to sacrifice on his behalf, and exalt him to heaven in the same Chandala form to which he had been condemned by his preceptor's curse. "Heaven is now as good as in the possession, since thou hast resorted to the son of Kushika.' " He then directed that preparations should be made for the sacrifice, and that all the rishis, including the family of Vasishtha, should be invited to the ceremony.

The disciples of Vishvamitra who had conveyed his message, reported the result on their return in these words: "Having heard your message, all the Brahmins are assembling in all the countries, and have arrived, excepting Mahodaya (Vasishtha). Hear what dreadful words those hundred Vasishthas, their voices quivering with rage, have uttered: 'How can the gods and rishis consume the oblation at the sacrifice of that man, especially if he be a Chandala, for whom a Kshatriya is officiating priest? How can illustrious Brahmins ascended to heaven, after eating the food of a Chandala, and being entertained by Vishvamitra?" These ruthless words all the Vasishthas, together with Mahodaya, uttered, their eyes inflamed with anger." Vishvamitra who was greatly incensed on receiving this message, by a curse doomed the sons of Vasishtha to be reduced to ashes, and reborn as degraded outcasts (*mritapah*), for seven hundred births, and Mahodaya to become a Nishada.

Knowing that this curse had taken effect Vishvamitra then, after eulogizing Trishanku, proposed to the assembled rishis that the sacrifice should be celebrated. To this they assented, being actuated by fear of the terrible sage's wrath, Vishvamitra himself officiated at the sacrifice as Yajaka; and the other rishis as priests (*ritvijah*) (with other functions) performed all the ceremonies."

In this dispute between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra, Sudas seems to have played an important part. Vasishtha was the family priest of Sudas. It was Vasishtha who performed his coronation ceremony. It was Vasishtha who helped him to win the battle against the ten kings. Notwithstanding this, Sudas removed Vasishtha from office. In his place he appointed Vishvamitra as his purohita who performed yajna for Sudas. This is the first deed of Sudas which created enmity between Sudas and Vasishtha. There was another deed which Sudas committed which widened and intensified the enmity. He threw into fire Shakti the son of Vasishtha and burned him alive. The story is reported in the Satyayana Brahmana. The Satyayana Brahmana does not give the reason for such an atrocious act. Some light is thrown on it by Shadgurushishya in his Commentary on Katyayana's Anukramanika to the Rig Veda. According to Shadgurushishya, a sacrifice was performed by Sudas at which there was a sort of public debate between Vishvamitra and Shakti, the son of Vasishtha and in this debate, to use the words of Shadgurushishya:

"The power and speech of Vishvamitra were completely vanquished by Shakti, son of Vasishtha; and the son of Gadhi (Vishvamitra) being so overcome, became dejected."

Here is the reason why Sudas threw Shakti into fire. Obviously, Sudas did it to avenge the dishonour and disgrace caused to Vishvamitra. Nothing could avert a deadly enmity growing up between Sudas and Vasishtha.

This enmity does not seem to have ended with Sudas and Vasishtha. It appears to have spread to their sons. This is supported by the Taittiriya Samhita which says

"Vasishtha, when his son had been slain, desired, 'May I obtain offspring; may I overcome the Saudasas.' He beheld this *ekasmannapanchasa*, he took it and sacrificed with it. In consequence he obtained offspring, and overcame the Saudasas."

This is confirmed by the Kaushitaki Brahmana which says :

"Vasishtha, when his son had been slain, desired, 'May I be fruitful in offspring and cattle and overcome the Saudasas. He beheld this form of offering, the Vasishtha-sacrifice; and having performed it, he overcame the Saudasas."

II

The conflict between Sudas and Vasishtha is not the only conflict between kings and the Brahmins. The Puranas record other conflicts also between kings and Brahmins. It is desirable to assemble them here. The first relates to king Vena. The story of his conflict with Brahmins has been told by various authorities. The following account is taken from the Harivamsa :

"There was formerly a Prajapati (Lord of creatures), a protector of righteousness called Anga, of the race of Atri, and resembling him in power. His son was the Prajapati Vena who was but indifferently skilled in duty, and was born of Sunita, the daughter of Mrityu. This son of the daughter of Kala (Death), owing to the taint derived from his maternal grandfather, threw his duties behind his back, and lived in covetousness under the influence of desire. This king established an irreligious system of conduct; transgressing the ordinances of the Veda, he was devoted to lawlessness. In his reign men lived without study of the sacred books and without the Vashatkara, and the gods had no Soma libations to drink at sacrifices. 'No sacrifice or oblation shall be offered'— such was the ruthless determination of that Prajapati, as the time of his destruction approached. I,' he declared, ' am the object, and the performer of sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself; it is to me that sacrifice should be presented, and oblations offered.' This transgressor of the rules of duty, who arrogated to himself what was not his due, was then addressed by all the great rishis headed by Marichi: 'We are about to consecrate ourselves for a ceremony which shall last for many years; *practise* not unrighteousness, Vena; this is not the eternal rule of duty. Thou art in very deed a Prajapati of Atri's race, and thou hast engaged to protect thy subjects.' The foolish Vena, ignorant of what was right, laughingly answered those great rishis, who had so addressed him; 'who but myself is the ordainer of duty? or whom ought I to obey? Who on earth equals me in sacred knowledge, in prowess, in austere fervour, in truth? Ye, who are deluded and senseless, know not that I am the source of all beings and duties. Hesitate not to believe that I, if I willed, could burn up the earth, or deluge it with water, or close up heaven and earth.' When owing to his delusion and arrogance Vena could not be governed, then the mighty rishis becoming incensed, seized the vigorous and struggling king, and rubbed his left thigh. From this thigh, so rubbed, was produced a black man, very short in stature, who, being alarmed, stood with joined hands. Seeing that he was agitated, Atri said to him 'Sit down' (*nishida*). He became the founder of the race of the Nishadas, and also progenitor of the Dhivaras (fisherman), who sprang from the corruption of Vena."

The next king who came in conflict with the Brahmins was Pururavas. This Pururavas is the son of Ila and grandson of Manu Vaivastava. The details of his conflict with the Brahmins are given in the Adi Parvan of the Mahabharata :

"Subsequently, the wise Pururavas was born of Ila, who, as we have heard, was both his father and his mother. Ruling over the thirteen islands of the ocean, and surrounded by beings who were all superhuman, himself a man of great renown, Pururavas, intoxicated by his prowess, engaged in a

conflict with the Brahmins, and robbed them of their jewels, although they loudly remonstrated. Sanatkumara came from Brahma's heaven, and addressed to him an admonition, which, however, he did not regard. Being then straightaway cursed by the incensed rishis, he perished, this covetous monarch, who, through pride of power, had lost his understanding."

The third king in this series is Nahusha. This Nahusha is the grandson of Pururavas, the account of whose conflict with the Brahmins has been recounted above. The story of Nahusha and his conflict with the Brahmins has been told in two places in the Mahabharata, once in the Vanaparvan and again in the Udyogaparvan. The account, which follows, is taken from the Udyogaparvan. It says:

After his slaughter of the demon Vritra, Indra became alarmed at the idea of having taken the life of a Brahmin (for Vritra was regarded as such), and hid himself in the waters. In consequence of the disappearance of the king of the gods, all affairs, celestial as well as terrestrial, fell into confusion. The rishis and gods then applied to Nahusha to be their king. After first excusing himself on the plea of want of power, Nahusha at length, in compliance with their solicitations, accepted the high function. Up to the period of his elevation he had led a virtuous life, but he now became addicted to amusement and sensual pleasure; and even aspired to the possession of Indrani, Indra's wife, whom he had happened to see. The queen resorted to the Angiras Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods who engaged to protect her. Nahusha was greatly incensed on hearing of this interference; but the gods endeavoured to pacify him, and pointed out the immorality of appropriating another person's wife. Nahusha, however, would listen to no remonstrance, and insisted that in his adulterous designs he was no worse than Indra himself. The renowned Ahalya, a rish's wife, was formerly corrupted by Indra in her husband's lifetime. Why was he not prevented by you? And many barbarous acts, and unrighteous deeds, and frauds were perpetrated of old by Indra; why was he not prevented by you?' The gods, urged by Nahusha, went to bring Indram; but Brihaspati would not give her up. At his recommendation, however, she solicited Nahusha for some delay, till she should ascertain what had become of her husband. This request was granted. Indrani now went in search of her husband; and by the help of Upashruti (the goddess of night and revealer of secrets) discovered him existing in a very subtle form in the stem of a lotus growing in a lake situated in a continent within an ocean north of the Himalayas. She made known to him the wicked intentions of Nahusha, and entreated him to exert his power, rescue her from danger and resume his dominion. Indra declined any immediate interposition on the plea of Nahusha's superior strength; but

suggested to his wife a device by which the usurper might be hurled from his position. She was recommended to say to Nahusha that if he would visit her on a celestial vehicle borne by rishis, she would with pleasure submit herself to him.'

The queen of the gods accordingly made this proposal: 'I desire for thee, king of the gods, a vehicle hitherto unknown, such as neither Vishnu nor Rudra, nor the Asuras, nor the Rakshasas employ. Let the eminent rishis, all united, bear thee, lord, in a car; this idea pleases me'. Nahusha receives favourably this appeal to his vanity, and in the course of his reply thus gives utterance to his self-congratulation; 'He is a personage of no mean prowess who makes the munis his bearers. I am a fervid devotee of great might. Lord of the past, the future, and the present. If I were angry, the world would no longer stand; on me everything depends. Wherefore, goddess, I shall, without doubt, carry out what you propose. The seven rishis and all the Brahmin rishis, shall carry me. Behold, beautiful goddess, my majesty and my prosperity.'

The narrative goes on :

Accordingly this wicked being, irreligious, violent, intoxicated by the force of conceit, and arbitrary in his conduct, attached to his car the rishis, who submitted to his commands, and compelled them to bear him. Indrani then again resorts to Brihaspati who assures her that vengeance will soon overtake Nahusha for his presumption; and promises that he will himself perform a sacrifice with a view to the destruction of the oppressor, and the discovery of Indra's lurking place. Agni is then sent to discover and bring Indra to Brihaspati and the latter, on Indra's arrival, informs him of all that had occurred during his absence. While Indra, with Kubera, Yama, Soma and Varuna was devising means for the destruction of Nahusha, the sage Agastya came up, congratulated Indra on the fall of his rival, and proceeded to relate how it had occurred.

Wearied with carrying the sinner, Nahusha, the eminent divine-rishis, and the spotless Brahmin-rishis, asked that divine personage, Nahusha (to solve) a difficulty; 'Dost thou, O Vasava, most excellent of conquerors, regard as authoritative or not those Brahmana texts which are recited at the immolation of king?' 'No', replied Nahusha, whose understanding was enveloped in darkness. The rishis rejoined; Engaged in unrighteousness, thou attainest not unto righteousness; these tests, which were formerly uttered by great rishis, are regarded by us as authoritative.' Then (proceeds Agastya) disputing with the munis, Nahusha impelled by unrighteousness touched me on the head with his foot. In consequence of this, the king's glory was smitten and his prosperity departed. When he had instantly

become agitated and oppressed with fear, I said to him, 'Since thou, a fool, condemnest that sacred text, always held in honour, which has been composed by former sages, and employed by Brahmin-rishis and hast touched my head with thy foot, and employest the Brahma-like and irresistible rishis as bearers to carry thee, therefore, shorn of thy lustre and all thy merit exhausted, sink down, sinner, degraded from heaven to earth. For ten thousand years thou shalt crawl in the form of a huge serpent. When that period is completed, thou shalt again ascend to heaven.' So fell that wicked wretch from the sovereignty of the gods. Happily, O Indra, we shall now prosper, for the enemy of the Brahmins has been smitten. Take possession of the three worlds, and protect their inhabitants, O husband of Shachi (Indrani), subduing the senses, overcoming thine enemies, and celebrated by the great rishis."

The fourth king to come into conflict with the Brahmins was Nimi. The details of the story are related in the Vishnu Purana which says:

"Nimi had requested the Brahmin-rishi, Vasishtha to officiate at a sacrifice, which was to last a thousand years. Vasishtha in reply pleaded a pre-engagement to Indra for five hundred years, but promised to return at the end of that period. The king made no remark, and Vasishtha went away, supposing that he had assented to his arrangement. On his return, however, the priest discovered that Nimi had retained Gautma (who was, equally with Vasishtha a Brahmin-rishi) and others to perform the sacrifice; and being incensed, he cursed the King, who was then asleep, to lose his corporeal form. When Nimi awoke and learnt that he had been cursed without any previous warning, he retorted by uttering a similar curse on Vasishtha, and then died. Nimi's body was embalmed. At the close of the sacrifice which he had begun, the gods were willing, on the intercession of the priests, to restore him to life; but he declined the offer; and was placed by the deities, according to his desire, in the eyes of all living creatures. It is in consequence of this that they are always opening and shutting (Nimisha means 'the twinkling of the eye').

These foregoing cases of conflict have been referred to by Manu in his Smriti:

"Through a want of modesty many kings have perished, together with their belongings; through modesty even hermits in the forest have gained kingdoms.

Through a want of humility Vena perished, likewise king Nahusha, Sudas, the son of Pijavana, Surnukha, and Nimi."

Unfortunately, the bearing of these cases on the position of the Shudra has not been realised as fully as it should have been. The reason is that nobody has realised that this conflict was a conflict between Brahmins and Shudras.

Sudas definitely was a Shudra. The others although they have not been described as Shudras are described as having been descended from Ikshvaku. Sudas is also described as a descendant of Ikshvaku. There is nothing far-fetched in saying that they were all Shudras. Even Manu had no idea of this. He represents these cases as cases of conflict between Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Dr. Muir has failed to realise that Sudas was a Shudra and has in recounting these stories represented that the parties to these conflicts were Brahmins on the one hand and the Kshatriyas on the other. In a sense, it is true that the conflict was between Brahmins and Kshatriyas because the Shudras were also a branch of the Kshatriyas. It would, however, have been far more illuminating if they had been described in more precise terms as conflicts between Brahmins and Shudras. The misunderstanding having been caused, it has remained and has continued to conceal the real nature of so important a part of the history of the Indo-Aryan society. It is to clear this misunderstanding that the hearing given to this Chapter is 'Brahmins *versus* Shudras' and not 'Brahmins *versus* Kshatriyas'. Understood as a history of conflict between Brahmins and Shudras, it helps one to understand how the Shudras came to be degraded from the second to the fourth Varna.

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